

University of North Texas (UNT)
Mathematics and Science Initiative

Activity: Elm Fork Education Center (EFEC)

**Goal area of the activity: Increasing public understanding
Improving teacher quality**

Summary of work

The Elm Fork Education Center (EFEC) is the K-12 arm of UNT's interdisciplinary Environmental Science program. Education initiatives for students include the Environmental Discovery and Adventure program where elementary students spend a day in a unique learning environment that includes aquatic and archeology lessons in the Outdoor Education Area, wildlife biology lessons in the Crow Creek Quest, astronomy in the Sky Theater, and informal hands-on learning in the Eagle Exhibit Hall, a changing science museum. The Sky Theater, Eagle Exhibit Hall, and Texas Geology Trail are used separately, as well, by a variety of programs. An Environmental Explorers program for preschoolers has been developed with Denton Parks and Recreation, and a week-long summer day camp enables students in grades 2 through 8 to continue their explorations in science.

Programs for teachers include The Environmental Conditions Online for the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex (ECOPLEX), an EPA-funded resource that enables teachers and students to interpret data on environmental conditions; the Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) Program, which enables students to collect and report environmental data using the Internet; and science education workshops designed by the EFEC staff of environmental educators for K-12 teachers..

Purpose of activity: To increase awareness of and commitment to science and environmental education by involving K-12 students and teachers in hands-on, inquiry-based learning.

Accomplishments/Results

In 2001-2002, the Elm Fork Education Center hosted more than 42,060 visitors, including 13,843 Pre-K-12 students, 743 teachers, and 2,527 parents. Participants came from more than 100 public and private schools in more than 40 districts within a 35-mile radius of Denton. Since 1998, the Center has had 60,124 participants

Plans for next 12 months

Increase the role of Elm Fork Education Center in preservice teacher education at UNT
Increase the number of school district partners
Involve scouting groups and families in after school, evening, and weekend activities
Develop an off-campus Science in Motion program
Increase use of the Sky Theater and the EESAT building as a special event site
Increase participation numbers by 20%